

CLASS 1: *The Creator's Heart from the Beginning: Genesis to Deuteronomy*

Lesson: God's Provision

1. Every Need Met in Eden

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

- Imagine God's mind at the beginning... his desire to create a magnificent world. The canvas was blank... formless and empty; the Spirit of God was ready...
- He filled the earth with good things... it was good. Then humans... and it was very good.
- There was air to breathe, vegetation, water, animals, a beautiful garden... a paradise
- Every need was met in Eden. What happened?

2. Trouble in Paradise

- Genesis 3: Humans broke trust with God and discovered discontentment.
- Genesis 4: Cain murdered Abel. Seeds of mistrust were sown between their descendants.
- Genesis 6: Noah witnessed, "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." (Gen 6:5)
- Genesis 11: The Tower of Babel. The "haves" and "have-nots" ... far from Eden.

3. God's Plan: Mercy and Righteousness

- God is love. He is not just loving. His very being is love. His love is His mercy.
- His Mercy invited people into "righteousness" or right relationship.

Reading & Response: God's Provision in the Law of Moses

1. *Leviticus 23:22 When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.*
 - What does that make you think about?
2. *Leviticus 25:13,25,28 ¹³ In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property. ²⁵ If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. ²⁸ But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property.*
 - How was God trying to rescue people in need?
3. *Leviticus 25:35-38 If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. ³⁶ Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. ³⁷ You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. ³⁸ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.*
 - What surprises you about this verse?
4. *Leviticus 25:39-42 ³⁹ If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. ⁴⁰ They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors. ⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves.*
 - What was God's reasoning for not letting Israelites live as slaves?
5. *Deut. 15:4-6 ⁴ However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, ⁵ if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. ⁶ For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.*
 - Do you think God really expected the nation of Israel to eliminate poverty?

6. *Deut. 15:7-11* ⁷ If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. ⁸ Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. ⁹ Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. ¹⁰ Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. ¹¹ There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

- Does verse 11: “there will always be poor people in the land” contradict verse 4: “there need be no poor people among you”?

Worldwide Poverty	85% of the world population lives on less than \$30/day. Nearly 1/2 of the world’s population lives on less than \$7/day. More than 700 million live in extreme poverty at less than \$2.15/day. [World Bank]
Child Poverty	Nearly 1 billion children live in poverty—that is nearly 50% of all children. “Children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty.” [World Bank]
US Poverty	In the US, 36.8 million people (11.1%) live in poverty including 10 million (16.3%) children and 4.6 million (11%) seniors 65 and older. [US Census Bureau]
Orphans	150 million children worldwide are orphans. [UNICEF]
Infant Mortality	2.3 million infants die in their first month each year, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 years old. [World Health Organization (WHO)]
Clean Water	2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services. [WHO] 1.5 billion people lack basic sanitation facilities. [United Nations] Meanwhile, the average American uses 300 gallons of water each day. [EPA]
Literacy	Nearly a billion people are unable to read a book or sign their names. More than 2/3 of them are women. [UNESCO]

Small Group Discussion

- 3-5 people suggested in each group
- Take turns reading the statistics aloud from the slide (from page 4 of His Mercy)
- Discuss your reaction after reading through the list

Suggested questions for discussion

1. What statistics most surprise you?
 2. What question would you ask God about people’s poverty and neediness?
 3. Why do you think God allows people to live in poverty and desperate need?
 4. What do you think causes people to live in poverty or need in today’s world?
 5. Think about your needs. Who are the people in your life who have met your needs?
 6. Do you feel like you currently live in abundance or do you feel needy?
 7. How does that affect your ability to connect with other people in need?
- ➔ Outbrief – share one summary point the group discovered with the class [online: post in the chat]

Questions, Recap, & Reminders

1. Closing questions or thoughts from our discussion
2. Next week, Brett will be sharing Class 2: *How Israel Lost Their Heart: Joshua to 2 Chronicles*
3. Begin reading His Mercy, listen to the podcast!